

FIRST READING – B 5 LENT

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The days are surely coming, says the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers
when I took them by the hand
to bring them out of the land of Egypt –
a covenant that they broke,
though I was their husband,
says the Lord.
But this is the covenant
that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,
says the Lord:
I will put my law within them,
and I will write it on their hearts;
and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other,
“Know the Lord,”
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord;
for I will forgive their iniquity,
and remember their sin no more.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – B 5 LENT

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

In the days of his flesh,
Jesus offered up prayers and supplications,
with loud cries and tears,
to the one who was able to save him from death,
and he was heard because of his reverent submission.
Although he was a Son,
he learned obedience through what he suffered;
and having been made perfect,
he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – B 5 LENT

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.
They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee,
and said to him,
“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”
Philip went and told Andrew;
then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them,
“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
Very truly, I tell you,
unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it remains just a single grain;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
The person who loves their life loses it,
and the person who hates their life in this world
will keep it for eternal life.
“Whoever serves me must follow me,
and where I am, there will my servant be also.
Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.
“Now my soul is troubled.
And what should I say – ‘Father, save me from this hour’?
No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.
Father, glorify your name.”
Then a voice came from heaven,
“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”
The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder.
Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”
Jesus answered,
“This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.
Now is the judgment of this world;
now the ruler of this world will be driven out.
And I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
will draw all people to myself.”
Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Jeremiah is prophesying to the Jews in Babylon. He interprets the unfaithfulness for which the Exile was a punishment as a breach of the old covenant made at the Exodus. The prophet looks forward to a new covenant that YHWH will make with his people.

This time God will write his law, not on tablets of stone, but in the hearts of his people. All of them will then “know” him, that is, live in obedience to his law.

From the time of Paul, Christians have seen the fulfillment of this prophecy in the covenant that was established by the blood of Christ and that led to the outpouring of the Spirit into the hearts of believers ([2 Corinthians 3:6ff](#)).

As has often been pointed out, this is the one passage in the Old Testament where the idea of a New Testament is expressly mentioned.

Responsorial Psalm: 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15

This psalm, the *Miserere*, is the most famous of the penitential psalms. It takes up and turns into a prayer Jeremiah’s prophecy that under the new covenant the hearts of believers will be inwardly transformed, so that their sins will be forgiven and they may walk in the law of the Lord.

Reading II: Hebrews 5: 7-9

The letter to the Hebrews alternates between ethical exhortation (parenthesis) and theological exposition, the one reinforcing the other. The theological exposition deals with Christ as the heavenly high priest. The author does not really get down to his major theological theme until chapter 7.

Before that he prepares the ground for his treatment. He must show that our Lord, despite his lack of Levitical descent, was indeed a high priest—a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The author enunciates this theme several times before he develops it. The passage that forms today’s reading is sandwiched between two such enunciations (vv. 5-6, 10).

In this section the author wishes to prove that our Lord has the requisite qualifications for high priest. He does this by arguing that no high priest appoints himself to the office but is chosen by God. He takes the Gethsemane scene as an illustration that this is true of Christ.

At Gethsemane, Christ did not seek honors for himself but dedicated himself unreservedly to the will of God. But the Gethsemane prayer was heard. Not that Jesus was saved from death, as he prayed (“Father, let this cup pass from me”); rather, through death and resurrection he was made perfect—God brought him to “perfection.”

“Perfect” here means reaching a goal or destiny, not moral perfection. His destiny was to become our high priest. To this office he was divinely appointed at the resurrection. He thus becomes the source of eternal salvation to all who accept the gospel.

Gospel: John 12: 20-33

Like the story about Nicodemus that we read last week, a traditional incident is used today as a springboard for a Johannine discourse. We are not told what happened to the Greeks—whether they really got to see Jesus or not. Doubtless in the earlier tradition the story came to a natural conclusion.

The Johannine discourse, with its two great pronouncements, develops the theme of the cross: (a) a grain of wheat must die if it is to bring forth fruit; (b) only by being lifted up will Christ draw all to himself.

These pronouncements are not unconnected with the Greeks' request. They cannot "see" Jesus—that is, experience messianic salvation—until after he has been crucified. Historically this was so.

The contacts of Jesus during his earthly ministry were almost exclusively confined to his own people (see [Romans 15:8](#)), and his contacts with Gentiles were strictly exceptional (the Greeks in this story, the Syro-Phoenician, a woman in Mark, and the centurion in Q—each time there is a reluctance on the part of Jesus to break the barrier). It was only later that Hellenistic Christians began preaching to Gentiles ([Acts 11](#)).

But there was also a theological reason why Jesus restricted his contacts to the Jews. It was only after the wall of partition had been broken down—that is, the Jewish law as a barrier between Jew and Gentile—that the Gentile mission could begin.

Thus, the grain of wheat has to die before it can bring forth fruit (win Gentile converts), and the Son of man has to be "lifted up" (Johannine language for the crucifixion-resurrection) before the Gentiles can be brought in.

The discourse is followed by a prayer of Jesus often called "the Johannine Gethsemane."

Reginald H. Fuller